



Manage Stress – A Focus on Stress Management



DECEMBER 2014 | *Monthly Topic*

Pay attention to your level of stress, which may increase during busy times such as holidays. Stress comes in many forms, and can have a negative effect on health if it continues too long or feels overwhelming. Many tools are available to help you manage and reduce your stress.

- **Manage Stress: A Healthy Living Message**

http://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Manage_Stress.asp

The Manage Stress Healthy Living message Web site includes a wealth of information such as:

- Specific suggestions for managing stress.
- Linkage to a comprehensive Manage Stress Workbook with a focus on mindfulness
http://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook_Dec2013.pdf.
- A Pleasant Activities Tip Sheet
http://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/PleasantActivitiesTipSheet_Dec2013.doc.
- Links to relaxation recordings to guide you through relaxation exercises including simple breathing exercises and mindfulness meditation.

- **Veterans Health Library –**

<http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>
The Veterans Health Library (VHL) offers Veterans, their families, and caregivers 24/7 Internet access to comprehensive, Veteran-focused health information that is consistent with VA clinical practice. Its information, resources, and tools are engaging, “Veteran-friendly,” and written in “plain language.” No matter where Veterans receive care, VHL helps them understand and manage health problems, make informed health decisions, and

actively partner with their health care teams. Items within the VHL on Manage Stress include:

- Stress: Causes and Effects
http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,85163_VA
- Keys to Managing Stress
http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,85165_VA

BASIC STRESS MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- **Physical Activity**—Take a brisk walk or engage in other physically demanding activities. This may reduce your stress. Regular physical activity is best.
- **Problem Solving**—Learn problem solving skills as this can often improve your ability to cope. Your medical center may offer a class or information session on problem solving skills. There is also a web-based problem-solving program available to you and listed under Veteran Tools below.
- **Relaxation Training**—Learn relaxation and mindfulness skills. These skills can assist you to manage the arousal that is associated with stress, and daily relaxation may protect you from at least some of the consequences of stress.
- **Expression**—Speak up in respectful ways. Sharing thoughts and feelings in an assertive and respectful manner can sometimes help buffer stress. Keeping those thoughts inside can increase your stress.
- **Time Management**—List what needs to get done, make plans for addressing issues, and stick to the plan. There are several self-help books on time management at libraries and book stores.
- **Positive Thinking**—Stress is often associated with negative, self-critical thinking. Focus your attention on positive thoughts about yourself, favorite songs, poems, favorite prayers, or hobbies.
- **Pleasant Activities**—You may be experiencing the



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effects of stress if you are not making time for fun in your life. Plan to have regular, enjoyable activities and see if this buffers your stress. See Pleasant Activities Tip Sheet below.

HELPFUL WEB SITES:*

- <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov>
- <http://www.veteranstraining.va.gov>
- http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/coe/cih-visn2/clinical_resources.asp
- <http://www.healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=825>* (Spanish translations available here)
- <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HandlingStress/>*
- <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-tips.asp>*
- <http://www.afterdeployment.org/>*

- **Veterans Crisis Line, Including On-Line Chat Service and Text Option for Suicide Prevention**—The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Suicide Prevention campaign is expanding its outreach to all Veterans with an online one-on-one chat service. It is designed for those Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance using the Internet and is at:
<http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>.
Veterans may also reach confidential help through sending a text to **838255** or calling **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** and press option 1.

ADDITIONAL RELAXATION TRAINING RESOURCES

- **Breathe2RelaxApp**—Learn deep breathing skills. Free of charge and available on the App Store
- **PTSD Coach App**—Free of charge and available on the App Store

*indicates non-VA Web Site